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at 3 p.m.
New York

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 2nd MEETING

Chairman: Mr. HAMBURGER (The Netherlands)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

ELECTION OF OFFICERS

1. The CHAIRMAN informed the Committee that the Group of Asian States had nominated Mr. Djabbary (Islamic Republic of Iran) for one of the posts of Vice-Chairman, and that the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States had nominated Ms. Corado-Cuevas (Guatemala) for the post of Rapporteur.

2. Mr. Djabbary (Islamic Republic of Iran) and Ms. Corado-Cuevas (Guatemala) were elected Vice-Chairman and Rapporteur, respectively, by acclamation.

3. The CHAIRMAN said that, there being no proposal from the Group of African States for the post of Vice-Chairman, the election of the remaining Vice-Chairman would be postponed.

ORGANIZATION OF WORK (A/51/250, A/C.2/51/L.1 and Add.1)

4. The CHAIRMAN noted that although the United Nations was a unique body that was increasingly essential in an integrated and interdependent world, there was increasing impatience regarding its performance. The Organization had greater potential than ever before in the economic and development fields, yet it could only continue to play its role if it was realistic and efficient, and if its decisions were action-oriented. The President of the General Assembly had made it clear that the Organization could no longer afford to waste either time or financial resources.

5. Turning to the practical and organizational aspects of the Committee's work, he drew attention to the fact that the Committee had 10 days less than in previous years to complete its work. It would therefore need to be much more efficient if it was to complete its work by the scheduled date of 29 November. Accordingly, meetings would begin promptly at 10 a.m. and 3 p.m. If a speaker was absent, that delegation would automatically be placed last on the list of speakers for that meeting. Delegations were also encouraged not to wait until the last minute to speak on agenda items.

6. It was proposed that the time limits for all speakers should be 15 minutes in the general debate and 7 minutes on individual agenda items. Introductory statements by members of the Secretariat would be limited to 10 minutes. Those time limits would be more strictly enforced than they had been in the past. In their introductory statements, the Secretariat, agencies, funds and programmes should focus on highlights and priorities rather than giving a very broad description of their activities. If possible, they should distribute their statements in advance.

7. The Committee's agenda was based on the clusters of items laid down in resolution 50/227 and the time-frame laid down in resolution 48/162. The programme of work took into account the availability of reports and, to the extent possible, the ability of high-level representatives of the Secretariat, agencies, funds and programmes to be present at meetings.

8. The Secretariat and the agencies would organize a number of "executive briefings" in order to help delegations prepare for the discussion of certain important agenda items. Committee members were invited to submit suggestions for the themes and focus for discussion under the clusters referred to in resolution 50/227. Priorities for the current session should be emphasized. Selection of a theme would not preclude the delivery of statements on other specific issues under the cluster.

9. He hoped that there would be fewer draft resolutions and that they would be shorter, as requested in resolution 50/227. Procedural issues would be dealt with in decisions rather than resolutions and deadlines for the submission of draft proposals would be more strictly applied than they had been in the past. The Bureau would explore the possibility of dealing with clusters of related items in omnibus or combined resolutions.

10. If he heard no objection, he would take it that the arrangements he had outlined were acceptable to the Committee.

11. It was so decided.

12. The CHAIRMAN said that the Committee's work would focus on the follow-up to the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II), the preparations for the special session for the purpose of an overall review and appraisal of the implementation of Agenda 21, debt and financial issues. He would also organize informal forum-type meetings to which outside experts would be invited. One such meeting, to be held on 14 October, would be on "economic developments and trends in the world"; another would deal with the debt issue. In addition, keynote speakers would present their views informally on different agenda items prior to the corresponding debates.

13. He planned to introduce question-and-answer periods following the introductory statements by representatives of the Secretariat or agencies. The latter would be requested not only to give their reaction at the end of each debate, but also, in specific cases, to react immediately to a statement made by a delegation. The Bureau would, in addition to its own meetings, hold "Chairman's open-ended informal consultations" as necessary.

14. Ms. KELLEY (Secretary of the Committee), drawing attention to document A/C.2/51/L.1, said that consideration of agenda item 101 (b), "United Nations University", would be moved up to 17 October at 3 p.m. since that was the only day the Rector could be present.

15. The proposed programme of work, as orally amended, was adopted.

16. Mrs. CHAVES (Costa Rica), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that some questions remained about how the arrangements proposed by the Chairman would be put into practice. The executive briefings should have been held prior to the opening of the General Assembly; they would be most effective if they took the form of question-and-answer sessions rather than lectures. Given the limited time available, she wondered whether it would truly be feasible for the Group of 77 to harmonize its own priorities and objectives with those of other groups represented in order to focus on priorities of common

interest to all, and whether additional time would be allocated to items which had been identified as priorities.

17. Although the Group of 77 would make every effort to be concise, the length of draft resolutions would depend on the issue being addressed. The Group also had some doubts about the feasibility of omnibus resolutions on such complex issues as trade and development or debt. The proposed informal exchanges of information would be a positive step if they were helpful in the negotiating process, but not as an academic exercise alone. Finally, she wondered how the Committee planned to consider the medium-term plan for the period 1998-2001 before the debate on that issue in the Fifth Committee.

18. Ms. KELLEY (Secretary of the Committee) replied that, after consultation with the Bureau regarding the medium-term plan, the Secretariat would, with the approval of the Committee, transmit a letter containing the Committee's views to the Fifth Committee.

19. Mr. PEDROSO CUESTA (Cuba) wondered whether that procedure was in conformity with the procedure outlined in General Assembly resolution 41/213. As all substantive bodies were supposed to participate fully in the programming process, one meeting might not be sufficient.

20. The CHAIRMAN said that the bureaux of the Second and Fifth Committees would consult on the matter.

21. Mr. MURPHY (Ireland), speaking on behalf of the European Union, welcomed inter alia the introduction of briefings by outside experts and question-and-answer sessions. He asked why so many documents would not be issued until October, which would leave Committee members very little time to study them.

22. Mr. STOBY (Director, Division for Policy Coordination and ECOSOC Affairs) replied that, while the Organization's resources and staff had been sharply reduced in recent years, the amount of documentation requested remained unchanged. He could not guarantee more efficient delivery of documents until Member States recognized the need to analyse the amount and kind of documentation necessary.

23. The CHAIRMAN suggested that the Committee should consider carefully whether a report was necessary on every draft resolution adopted.

24. Mr. AMAZIANE (Morocco) expressed the hope that the time limit on statements would be applied flexibly in the case of developing countries, which addressed the Committee on certain items only, and that flexibility would also be shown in reorganizing the programme of work should documents be issued late.

25. The CHAIRMAN re-emphasized that the Committee must complete the same amount of work in a shorter session and that therefore time limits would have to be more strictly enforced than in the past. Speakers were free to circulate lengthier statements to be read by Committee members. He would do his utmost to ensure that documentation was issued on time.

26. Mr. LOZANO (Mexico) said that the reasons given by the Secretariat for the late distribution of documentation were not satisfactory. Changes in the programme of work would affect the travel schedules of experts planning to fly in from capitals for the consideration of specific topics. He wondered how much advance notice would be given of such changes.

27. The CHAIRMAN said that any problem concerning documentation would be discussed as and when the need arose.

28. Mr. PEDROSO CUESTA (Cuba), referring to General Assembly resolution 41/213, section II, paragraph 3 (c), regarding consultations with sectoral, technical, regional and central bodies in the United Nations in the formulation of the medium-term plan, pointed out that, although his delegation supported consultations with the Fifth Committee, the latter was not empowered to propose changes in the Second Committee's programme of work.

29. The CHAIRMAN said that the Second Committee would convey its concerns to the Fifth Committee.

30. The programme of work contained in document A/C.2/51/L.1, as orally revised, was adopted.

The meeting rose at 4.10 p.m.